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LB 242, 799

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: (LB) 799 advances. LB 242.

CLERK: (LB) 242, a bill by Senator Engel. (Read title.) Bill was introduced on January 11, at that time referred to Health Committee, advanced to General File. There are committee amendments, Mr. President.

SENATOR ENGEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Engel, you're recognized to open.

SENATOR ENGEL: I rise in support of LB 242. The Health and Human Services Committee advanced LB 242 on a 7/0 vote with the committee amendments. An evaluation was conducted by the Program Evaluation Unit in 1998 of programs that give incentives to healthcare providers to practice in underserved areas of the state. One of the programs included in the evaluation was a student loan program offered under the Rural Health Opportunity Program, known as RHOP, which is administered by the University of Nebraska Medical Center, UNMC. LB 242 would eliminate the student loan program offered under the Rural Health Opportunities Program. The UNMC administration agrees with this recommendation and nothing...however, nothing else in the Rural Health Opportunities Program is changed by this particular bill. The Legislature provided a one-time appropriation of \$400,000 to fund the student loan program in 1993 and the University of Nebraska Foundation provided an equal match. The committee amendments require that money remaining in the Rural Health Opportunities Loan Pool Fund and money credited to the fund be transferred to the Rural Health Professional Incentive Fund and include nursing and nursing education programs. In 1995, UNMC conducted an evaluation of the student loan program and found that there was not a significant reason for students' participation in the RHOP Program. The 1998 Legislative Program Evaluation Unit confirmed the results of the UNMC evaluation. The committee recommended the student loan program be eliminated and, again, the UNMC administration agrees with this recommendation. And, again, I'd like to emphasize, nothing else in the Rural Health Opportunities Program changes. I'll be glad to answer any questions you may have and urge the advancement of